

Congressman Cohen visits Memphians attending U.S. Naval Academy

By [Bartholomew Sullivan](#) Updated: October 13, 2018 4:00 AM CT

- -
 -
 -
-



U.S. Congressman Steve Cohen visited with U.S. Naval Academy Midshipmen Brody McDonald (from left), C.J. McCoy and David Boyd. Cohen was there to learn more about the institution in Annapolis, Md., and asked the Memphians what he needed to know. (Photo courtesy of U.S. Rep. Steve Cohen)

ANNAPOLIS, Maryland – For U.S. Naval Academy Midshipman C.J. McCoy of Memphis, whose goal is to be a naval aviator, the life lesson that got him here is straight forward: “Don’t give up.”

“I tried three times to get in here,” the 24-year-old Memphis University School graduate told Congressman Steve Cohen earlier this week when the lawmaker visited with three of his seven 9th Congressional District constituents attending the prestigious military academy that produces U.S. Navy and Marine officers. Before McCoy was accepted, he had attended Middle Tennessee State for two years.

“This place has changed my life,” McCoy said. “It has elevated me as far as my future trajectory and the path I’m walking.”

McCoy joined second class (the equivalent of college junior) Midshipmen Brody McDonald and David Boyd, both 20, on Tuesday at a conference room of Bancroft Hall, the largest single dormitory building on earth, housing 4,000 students. Cohen was there to learn more about the institution and asked the Memphians what he needed to know.

“I’ve never had that kind of power,” Boyd, an Evangelical Christian School graduate, joked of advising a congressman.

Cohen told the midshipmen he doesn’t always vote for the Department of Defense budgets that finance institutions like the Naval Academy, the Air Force Academy in Colorado or the Military Academy at West Point, N.Y., but noted he had voted for the most recent one when social safety net programs important to his district were included. Cohen asked the midshipmen to spend those dollars wisely.

The visit to Annapolis coincided with the FBI's release of a report ranking Memphis' homicide rate the third worst among the country's 50 largest cities, behind Baltimore and Detroit. Boyd mentioned the statistic and Cohen noted the recent Front Street slaying of Memphis Chamber CEO Phil Trenary and even more recent killings in Raleigh, South Memphis and Oakhaven.

"I feel terrible about it, too, but there's only so much a congressman can do," he said. Cohen noted he has a bill pending that would send more money to police departments in areas with disproportionately high violent-crime levels, and has worked to reverse the backlog on rape kit testing, but he said crime is primarily a local issue best addressed by mayors, the district attorney general and the crime commission.

McDonald, who graduated from White Station High School, said all three midshipmen have applied through Operation Information to get leave to return home early for Thanksgiving in order to go back to their high schools and do some recruiting.

As the meeting broke up, McCoy said he had "a quick question" for Cohen. "Given our position, how do you see us as future leaders going forward, going back to Memphis? How do we become effective?"

Cohen told him: "You've got an opportunity to be a role model for people. When people know you're a Naval Academy graduate, it gives you a certain status with people; young people will respect you. It gives you a patina that gives you an extra push. Also you learn leadership here."

Offering a lesson from history, Cohen noted that one of his predecessors, the late Memphis Congressman George W. Grider, was an Annapolis graduate and a man who "had his own compass." When he took office in 1965, Grider voted for the

Voting Rights Act “which was the right thing to do,” Cohen said. But the unpopular vote led to his defeat for re-election and he served only one term.

Because of a scheduling conflict involving football practice and weight training, Cohen was unable to meet with 9th District Midshipmen Sean Williams, 21, of Cordova, or Memphians Cameron Kinley, 19; Caleb Clear, 19; and Camren Taylor, 20.

TOPICS

STEVE COHEN 9TH CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT U.S. NAVAL ACADEMY